

Educators gather for Catholic schools convocation in Timonium

TIMONIUM - Yellow school buses pulled in front of the Church of the Nativity, carrying not students, but teachers gathering for the eighth annual convocation for Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

The event drew more than 1,300 Catholic school educators, who came together to begin the new academic year in prayer.

In **his homily** during a morning Mass, Archbishop William E. Lori addressed the sexual abuse crisis heightened by recent accusations against Archbishop Theodore McCarrick of Washington and revelations from a Pennsylvania grand jury report released Aug. 14.

"People are bewildered and angry both at the crimes committed against the young and at the failure of some bishops, especially in the past, to effectively root this evil out of churches and ministries," the archbishop said. "All this has undermined the trust people should have in the church and its leaders.

"They are looking, as you are, for concrete solutions and decisive actions, and while much is underway, it will take some time for these things to come about, remembering that they require hard work on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean," he continued. "As you deal with parents and families, you no doubt hear about these things in spades and I am aware that this has placed a heavy burden on your shoulders. For the weight and sorrow of this burden, I am truly sorry.

The archbishop encouraged educators to never forget the hard work they have done to create a safe environment for the young people they serve.

"Thank you for your leadership and cooperation with regard to all the measures that go into creating the kind of schools to which parents can entrust their children," he said. "Your good work is very helpful in beginning to reknit the broken bonds of trust."

Archbishop Lori announced that three regional listening sessions for Catholic school principals and teachers are scheduled.

“(The educators) work very closely with not only our students, but with the families,” Archbishop Lori said in an interview with the Catholic Review following the Mass. “They, too, are, in a very direct way, affected by this.”

The archbishop said he wanted to give a word of encouragement to them, to ensure them that work is being done and to express his gratitude.

Year of Service

In his remarks, James Sellinger, chancellor of education, recalled a letter he recently received from a fourth-grader at St. John Regional Catholic School in Frederick.

The letter thanked those at the archdiocese for the financial assistance that helped her to “return to the school I love.”

Sellinger also announced the 2018-19 school year as the Year of Service, with the theme of “Created for Good Works.”

In her keynote address, Dr. Donna Hargens, who is beginning **her first year** as superintendent for the archdiocese’s Catholic schools, said the Year of Service gives educators an opportunity to put the Department of Schools’ mission into action.

Hargens also recalled moments she remembered from her time in Catholic school growing up in Milwaukee, Wis. As she addressed the educators, she said she was sure they will create memorable moments for the more than 25,000 students enrolled in Catholic schools in the archdiocese for the upcoming year.

Recognition

A Catholic educator for more than 40 years, Oblate Sister of Providence Rita Michelle Proctor was honored as the 2018 Doris Musil Awardee.

During her first year as a principal, Sister Rita met Musil, a former assistant superintendent, and grew to know her over their years serving with each other in Catholic education.

“She gently but firmly guided me through my first-year jitters,” Sister Rita said in her remarks. “I had the privilege and pleasure of knowing (her).”

In an interview with the Catholic Review before the convocation, Sister Rita said Musil was “a woman who truly loved Catholic education, as I do.”

Sister Rita, in Baltimore alone, taught at Father Charles Hall School, St. Frances Academy, Ss. James and John School and Archbishop Borders School, and served as principal at Father Charles Hall School, Mother Mary Lange Catholic School and Cardinal Shehan School.

Archbishop Lori said that she is synonymous with Catholic education in Baltimore City.

When addressing her colleagues, Sister Rita told them to keep in mind that teachers make all other professions possible. She told them to remember that when the days get long and the job gets tiring.

More than 300 educators celebrating anniversaries ranging from five to 50 years were honored at the convocation, including Karen Smith, principal of St. John Regional Catholic School in Frederick.

Smith, a 35-year Catholic school veteran, began teaching in the Dioceses of Patterson (N.J.) and Newark (N.J.) and knew she wanted to continue in a Catholic school environment when she moved to Maryland in 2000.

“That was where I felt most at home,” Smith said. “I like the idea that we can pray with our students and share our rituals with them.”

Genie Massey, of St. Maria Goretti High School in Hagerstown, and Kristen Zorica, of St. John the Evangelist School in Severna Park, **were honored as the 2018 Archdiocesan Teachers of the Year**. Each received a laptop.

Massey and Zorica were chosen from a pool of 42 teachers – one from each Catholic school in the archdiocese – of individual school Teachers of the Year. All teachers of the year received a Chromebook.

Gabrielle Kemp, who is beginning her fifth year teaching fourth- and fifth-grade language arts and religion at Our Lady of Hope/St. Luke School in Dundalk, said starting off the school year with a Mass was a great way for the school year to be blessed.

“I love being able to share the beauty of the Catholic faith with children and help them grow in their relationship with Jesus,” Kemp said, adding that it was great to come together with her colleagues. “Catholic school teachers are a community.”

*For more photos, visit our Smugmug gallery **here**.*

Also see:

New superintendent excited about ‘Year of Service’

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